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ABSTRACT

This book relates the history of four Catholic Indian boarding schools in the Dakota Territory between 1870 and 1928. Chapter 1 covers 1870 to 1887, when federal Indian relations were driven by the Peace Policy, which assigned reservations to specific religious bodies and established a formal system of schools to assimilate American Indians into mainstream American life. The Fort Totten and Fort Yates schools were established during this period. The Catholic sisters operating the schools, themselves immigrants struggling with a new culture, implemented a selective acculturation, which enabled students to straddle the White and Indian worlds and gained acceptance from the Sioux community. Chapter 2 describes the period between 1888 and 1906. During this time, Saint Francis and Holy Rosary Mission were opened, and formal relations between the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions were severed. Chapter 3 covers 1906 to 1928, during which the federal government ended involvement of the Grey Nuns and Benedictines with the Fort Totten and Yates schools, while Saint Francis and Holy Rosary witnessed a revival because tribal funds were allocated to mission schools. Chapter 4 attributes the success of the four Catholic Indian schools to meaningful adaptation by Indian students and religious staff; the presence of a middle ground that was valued by all constituencies; the dictates of Catholic missiology; the positive interaction between immigrant female teachers and reservation Indians; the vibrancy of frontier Catholicism; and a positive acceptance of biculturalism. (Contains 442 references, photographs, and an index.) (TD)

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